

**Linda Clair**  
**Seven-day Meditation Retreat**  
**Kallara Conference Centre, Australia – March 2019**  
**Transcription from Audio Recordings**

**File 2b – Sunday morning discussion**

Linda: So any questions?

Question: It's not really a question – it's more saying how I'm really struggling to stay in the body. It's a constant stream of big bubbles of thought and little bubbles of thought, and darting off in lots of different directions. So I feel a bit like I'm in a fight with the mind. I feel like I'm really having to try so hard to stay here; there're these constant, seductive little stories that keep on bubbling up.

Linda: Are you using the counting?

Question: A little bit, not a lot. It gets a bit hypnotic now if I use the counting so I've got a few mantras that I keep coming back to – I just repeat a few words.

Linda: What do you mean "hypnotic" with the counting?

Question: A couple of retreats ago I was telling you that I was counting all the time and I was getting really dependent on it and nervous of not counting. So then I pulled right back on it. So now I use it occasionally but I find it doesn't stop me thinking – I'm still thinking anyway.

Linda: In between the counting?

Question: It's like a stream of thought and a stream of counting; they seem to just run together.

Linda: Maybe try a bit harder with the counting, even just for today. The first couple of days often, first day and a half of a retreat, and today – the Sunday – is often the day where a lot of people can be having a lot of trouble being in their body, because there's this deep resistance to being here and you're going to feel it. And you come into it and you want to do your best, and you're a bit excited about it, and a bit scared about it. And you can't help but have expectations about it. Then suddenly you get here and it's just driving you crazy and wearing you down on the first day.

So be very careful you don't turn it into a fight because it's not a fight. What it is is you standing your ground and your mind trying to destabilise you, and then you standing your ground and your mind... And that's how it goes on. So the first day you really do have to stand your ground and don't let it put you off. The more you react to it the more it will turn into a fight and the more you'll be subtly feeding the mind. Because it knows that's it's got you, it knows that it's affecting you – "Oh, can't do this" – and tiring you out. And it will be tiring at times. So you've got to give it a couple of days, or another day, to just really start to settle in to it. But do your best – it's not like you just give up and you're just here for today – but do your best to be in your body. But don't worry too much about it. The more you worry about it the more you'll get worked up about the whole thing.

So I would suggest you do try the counting and maybe even put your hand down here when you're breathing to feel your abdomen going up and down. If you feel there're these two things happening just try and sharpen yourself up a bit more. Maybe just do it for the first ten minutes or so of a sit. But really get into it and don't be put off – keep going. And don't feel you have to do it for the whole sit but maybe the first ten minutes. And when you first sit down really take a few very deliberate breaths to go: "Okay, I'm going to sit here whatever." So yes, it will do its best, particularly today, so just try not to worry about it. As you go on things will change and settle down.

It's also not constant – it appears constant but just using that word constant gives your mind a bit more power. Because you're saying, "I'm at my mind's mercy." So you're putting yourself in this victim situation, and that will be the same thing if you try and fight it. And this is all about getting out of that victim situation that most of us have put ourselves in – "I'm a victim of my own mind, my own emotions, I'm a victim of myself." So this is becoming stronger and saying, "I'm not a victim." It's not going to be easy to get out of that identity that most of us have created. But, "I have to keep slogging on and doing it." And bit by bit, during this week, you will turn the tables. But when you first come into it it can be like that, for probably a lot of people.

So when I say, "Have you got any questions?" it's good to say something like you've said too. It doesn't have to be a question; it can be a comment, what's going on. Particularly when we haven't got the interviews, I do want to hear what's going on with people. Because it's not like I can look at you and go, "This is happening, that's happening." I can sometimes have – well, I do have a bit of an idea – but often when you speak about it it can really affect things. And it can also give you a bit more power and really affect the strength of your mind – just expressing it, verbally expressing it. So I'm sure other people in the room feel probably the same as you today.

But don't let it put you off. It's actually one good reason to have a residential retreat, and especially one that's out in the bush, because it's not easy to just go and escape and go down the shops, or say, "I'm going to go home and watch TV for a while, just to have a bit of a break." It's a really good situation to be in having it somewhere like this that is a bit more isolated and self-contained. So just keep working, keep working steadily, but don't fight. And it's all a bluff – it's not real, it's not nearly as strong as it is. But it is up to you not to give it more strength than it has.

And I've said this before – my mind used to sometimes get really quite agitated before something quite significant happened. It was like it sensed what was going on and it was desperately trying to put me off. And that's what happens. Your mind becomes desperate, just incredibly desperate, to hold on to its power because it knows by you doing this it will eventually become, not extinct, but unnecessary.

Question: Since this retreat started I've become very conscious of the thoughts. I keep coming back to the body, coming back to sensation, but I'm just really conscious that the thinking I'm doing is giving meaning to – you know, deciding that means that – giving meaning to, not every sensation, but whatever's going in the sit and when I'm walking around and all that. So I'm just keeping on coming back to sensation, and it doesn't seem to matter if it's really painful or pleasant, it doesn't matter. But it's almost like I'm needing to use my thought to say to myself, "Well, none of this means anything." So it's a kind of using it as a tool. But is that just doing the same thing then?

Linda: That's just thinking! You don't need to be thinking about the sensation. Why do you need to be thinking about it?

Question: Well I don't. But that's what's happening.

Linda: Well your mind is just trying to delude you into thinking that you need to be thinking. It's just trying to justify its existence and it becomes more and more subtle. You see you have a sensation and it's almost like it goes, "Oh, you need to know what this sensation is, how it feels, relate it to something." But you don't need to. And that's what you have to keep seeing: "Okay, I'm thinking – come back to the body." It's very, very simple. Just keep it as simple as possible. You don't need to analyse anything. It's just a habit – "I need to know what's happening." You don't need to know what's happening!

Linda: Haven't seen you for a while D. How are you?

Question: Not having such a great day today. Just feel quite a lot of pressure in my head and waves of sleepiness. I sat up the last one and that helped to sit up in a chair.

Linda: So sit in the chair if you need to. Like I said it's a settling in thing – different people will be feeling different things. The pressure in the head sounds good to me. (Some laughter.)

Question: It's very strong. It's around the top and goes behind my eyes. It's a fairly regular feature of sitting in the retreats.

Linda: Well, it doesn't feel good but to me it's a good sign.

Question: Coming into this retreat it felt like a complete bank. Normally – I didn't realise – normally coming to a retreat I obviously have some ideas or intuitions but coming into this one it was like a complete openness. And that was unusual and also felt good somehow – fresh.

Linda: It's the best way to come in without expecting anything because you really don't know. So if you need to sit on a chair at times it's not being weak or being a wuss – do it.

Linda: It's very lovely to see you two here. You going okay J.?

Question: Well, I'm not quite back to full strength yet. After breakfast is my sleepy time actually. I went and sat on a chair and fell asleep. But as you say, the first day is always settling in and I think that will pass. I'll sit on a chair more if I feel the need.

Linda: Yes, so just pace yourself. If you feel like missing a sit do that. Just see how you feel. But it's very good to see you here.

Question: Thank you. B. got agitated (when they became lost on the drive to retreat) because I decided to come a back route to the retreat. And I can see it was the sort of thing I used to do a lot when I was young, and it was kind of like working it out of the system doing something like that one last time. I have a feeling now of thinking, "Well that was probably the last time I'll do that."

Linda: Do you feel that?

Question: Yes, and with different things, “Oh, that could be the last time,” and sort of say goodbye to it.

Linda: That’s interesting. Do you feel sad about it?

Question: No, no I don’t feel sad about it. A tiny bit perhaps, but not really sad, and let it go. This illness – there has been a subtle shift in the ego – it’s as if something has just philatilisised a little more. It’s like when you leave dry ice out in room temperate and it sublimates, passes from the solid to the vapor phase. It’s just like a little bit of ego has...

Linda: Oh, I know what you mean, I know what you mean – it’s a really good description.

Question: Something has lightened just through going through that process.

Linda: Yes, I felt that in you. It’s very beautiful. J. has been very sick.

Question: I was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer and I’ve had chemotherapy and radiotherapy for it. The symptoms have now gone. The cancer may be still present for all I know because I haven’t had the scans yet, so it’s still up in the air. All I know is they put the five-year survival rate at around fifty percent. I’m feeling pretty good but there is that quality of saying, “Oh, this could be the last time I do this.” And it is a release.

Linda: If you do it like this it can be, definitely.

Question: On the other hand I might survive for years, I don’t know. 😊

Linda: Well, you might. And the thing is you don’t know. And none of us knows, we’ve got no idea.

Question: I had this experience in Canberra, in chemo, sitting in a café and seeing people walking up and down the street, and it suddenly struck me: “They’re all dying!” It was quite a salutatory experience. I looked at a young person and thought, “I can see the old man or old woman in you – won’t be long.” (Laughter.)

Question: That experience J. had – I was shopping while he was resting at a café, not even being able to eat anything at the café – but I knew he’d turned a corner from fear. Because he could see everybody and he could see himself with everybody and he was all same. It was a deeply moving experience; I’ll never forget it. It woke something up in me that he, facing his death, had allowed me to face mine. And everyone was eating their prosciutto and rustic bread, drinking wine. Just seeing the world and the joy and the sorrow everything all at once – it was quite wonderful. So it’s been up and down like that ever since.

Linda: So you were talking about doing things and feeling, “Oh, this could be the last time I do this.” I had a thing during a retreat once; it was a few years ago now. I was having these memories come up, these thoughts come up. I don’t know how I knew it but it was just: “This is the last time I’m going to think about this.” But there was a realisation, “Okay.” They were things that were still there a bit that I used to get a bit emotional. I can’t say what they were because I forgot about them, so I can’t say what the thought was, but as it was coming up it was like, “This is the last time.” It happened with a few things, and it was quite amazing, it was really incredible.

Question: I had similar things with relationships in the last couple of years. Where they've been maybe long-term relationships and we haven't caught up that much, and it just keeps hanging on, and then all of a sudden we see each other and I think, "Oh, that's it." There's a real finality about it.

Linda: And it's okay.

Question: Yes, and it's okay, it's absolutely fine; it's actually good. And there's no animosity or anything, it just feels, "Time's up."

Linda: Yes, I've done that with quite a few relationships where it's almost like there's this mutual, "Okay, move on," and it's alright. There's not a sadness, it's just obvious it's not right anymore. It doesn't mean it was ever wrong or anything. It's just, "Okay, that's it."

You look very clear V., you look very good, and you sound good too. And when you were doing the heart sutra last night your voice was amazing.

Question: As some others have shared – I feel like I've come in pretty open too. There's always a bit of resistance but it seems to be less and less, and less questioning about why I'm doing it. I backed off a bit from practice at home after last retreat. I guess I was questioning things a little.

Linda: Sometimes it's stronger than others. But you'll never lose it, it will never go – it's not like you lose something like this. But sometimes it goes on to a bit of idle while you sort out a few things in your life maybe, or you just slow it down.

Question: I think that email you put out a couple of weeks ago with the comments from the last retreat – about not searching for enlightenment but just doing the work. That was really timely and it kicked off the practice again at home, it was good.

Linda: It's all about timing.